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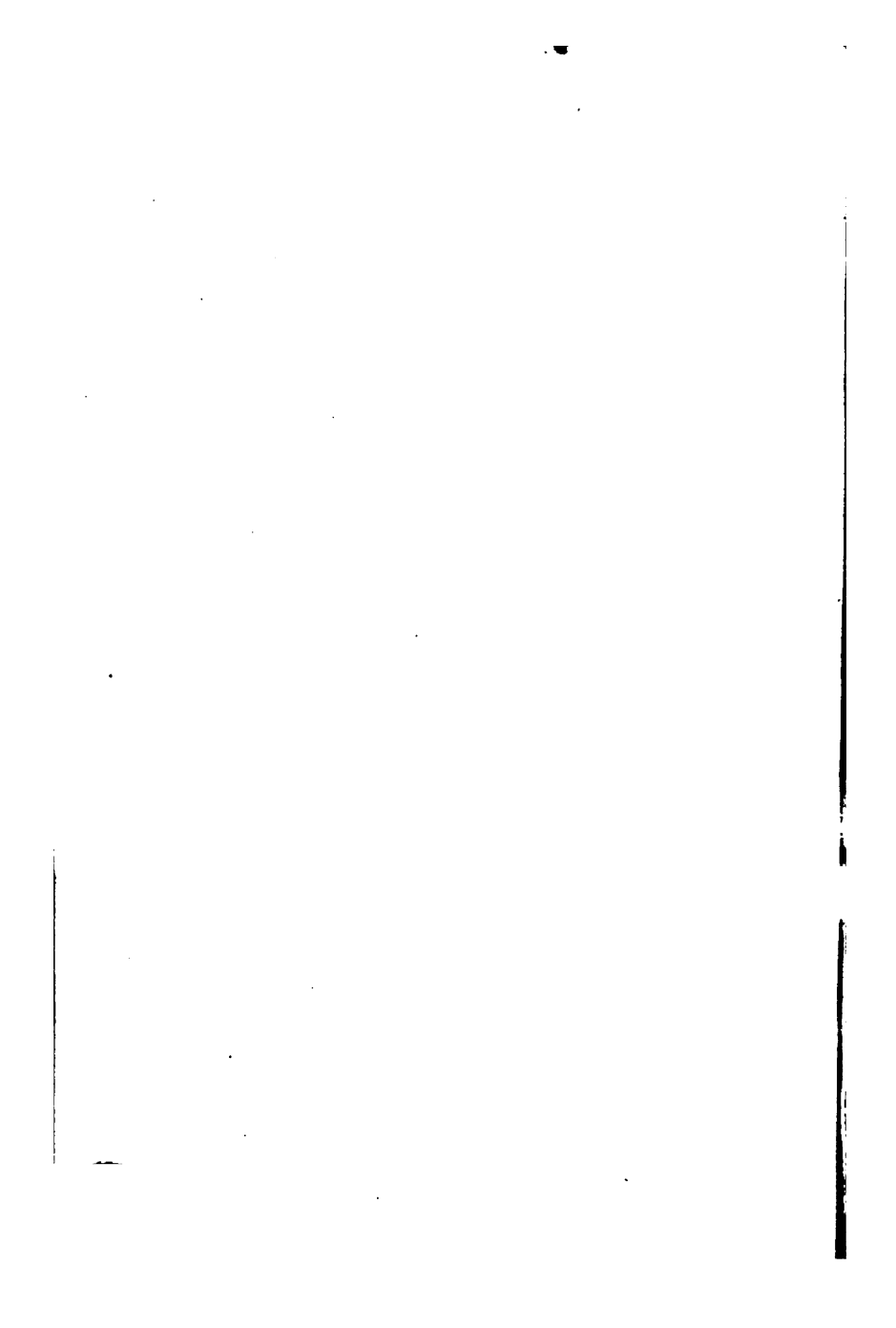
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Dec 25th 1924



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"LORD, I HAVEN'T GOT ANYTHING BUT THIS DOG"

ONATHAN and DAVID

BY
ELIZABETH STURGEON PHELPS

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
BY W. T. SPEDLEY



LESTER & BROTHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
MCMIX



PRINC. BUT. 11

JONATHAN *and* DAVID

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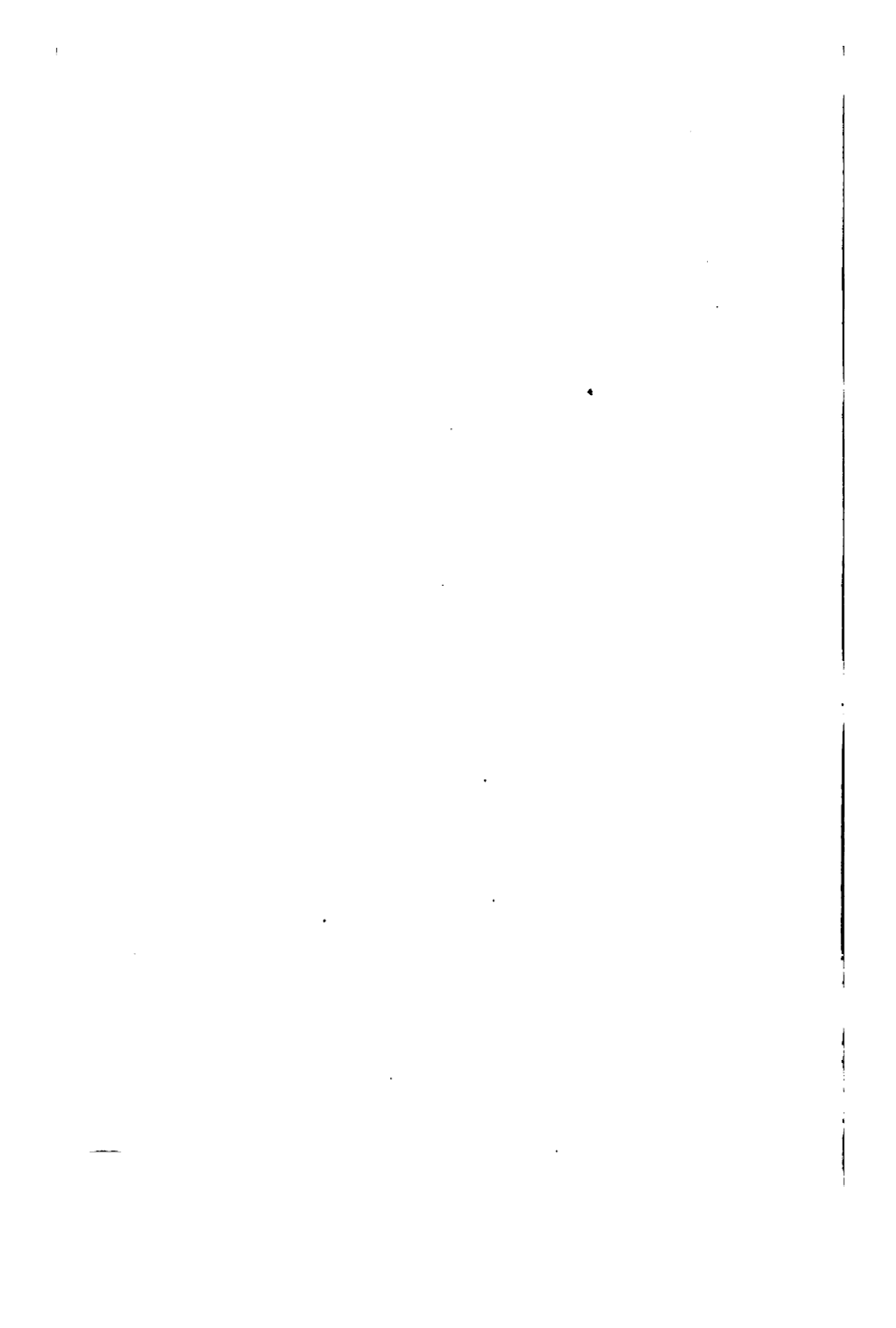
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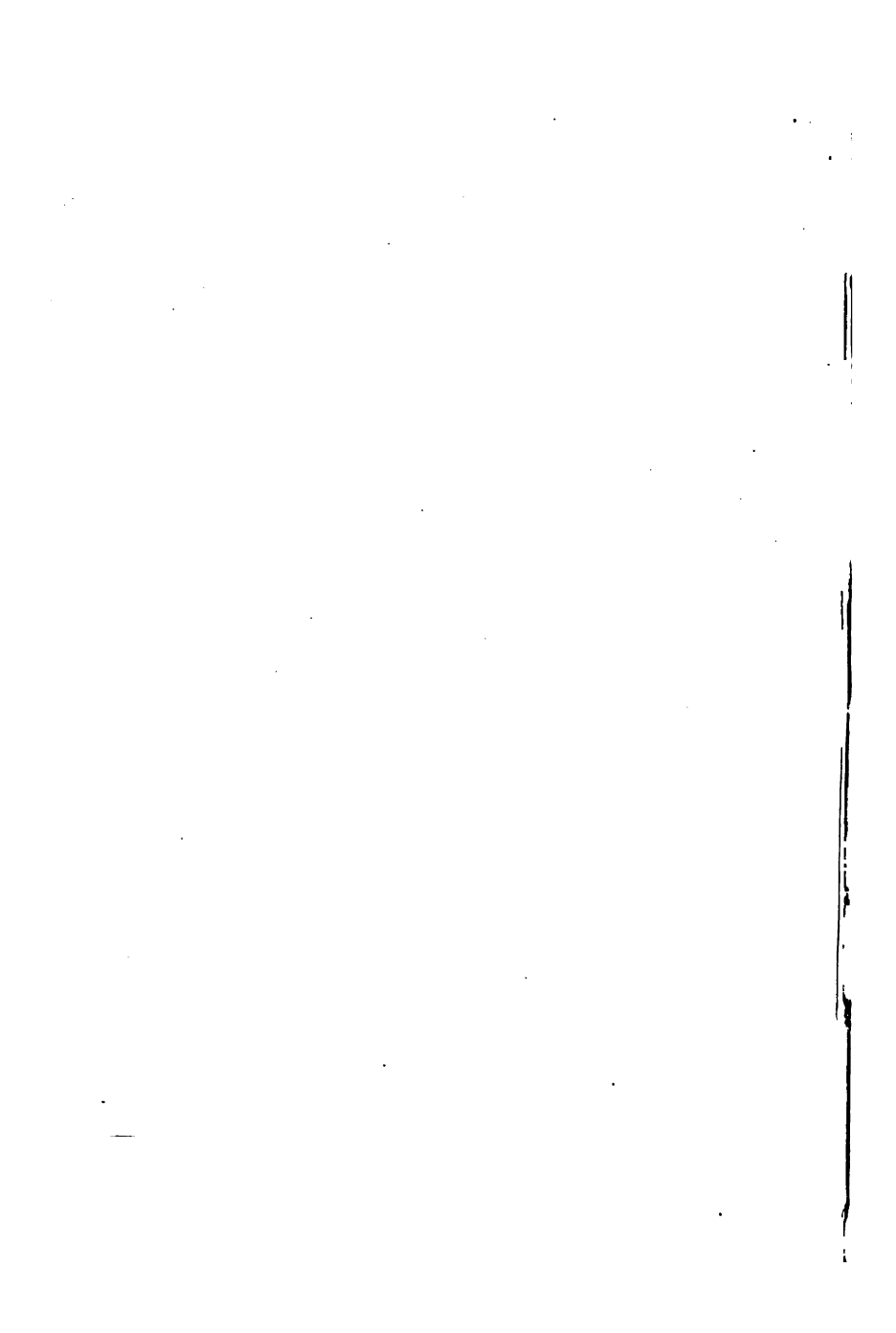
ILLUSTRATIONS

| | |
|--|--------------|
| "Lord, I haven't got anything but this dog" | Frontispiece |
| Jonathan's face had fallen over upon David's head | Facing p. 26 |
| "You have a right to it, madame, if you insist" | " 44 |

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***JONATHAN AND
DAVID***



JONATHAN AND DAVID



AN old man came out of his door and sat down on the ragged porch. It would be more exact to say that he sank down, for he dropped upon his broken chair heavily, as if from real physical weakness, or that agitation of mind and heart which creates it.

At first impression he seemed to be a very old man; but on the second, one would have judged him to be still something under seventy, and would have concluded that age had chased him down before his time

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because trouble had disarranged the schedule. He was a poor person, beyond a doubt; his threadbare clothes were those of a man for whom no woman cares. Several of the buttons were missing from his black coat and vest, and of those which remained two were sewed on with blue thread and one with white. His collar was raw at the edge, and his lean, cuffless wrists shook as he shut his hands together upon the piazza rail and dropped his face upon them.

He was not altogether bald, but had a considerable fringe of clear white hair, which was neatly brushed. Of the untidiness of age and solitude Jonathan Perch had so little that this circumstance alone distinguished him. He was scrupulously clean, and his wasted hands were those of a man who might have passed for something of a gentleman in his youth and vigor. These, now clasped, or, it might be, clinched, upon

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the porch rail, beneath his deeply wrinkled forehead, were not unlike the famous praying hands of Albert Dürer; they had a little of the delicacy and much of the pathos of that touching picture of which it has been said, "It lifts the cry of the ages from humanity to Heaven."

If Jonathan Perch had been told, thirty years before, that he should become at sixty-eight a pensioner upon his native town, he would have resented the impertinent prophecy as hotly as would any comfortable young man who may read this episode in the history of a lonely and neglected age.

By what subtle stages old Jonathan had fallen upon the fate of a man who has not succeeded, nobody knew; perhaps he himself least of all. America plays whimsical games of chance with the surest and the safest of us, and the loaded dice drop

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easily against the unbefriended and the weak; most easily against the sick and the sensitive. How ever it happened, Jonathan Perch was a beaten soldier in the battle of industrial life. He could hardly remember when last he earned a hundred dollars a year.

His shabby cottage had long ago been sold for taxes over his head. It had been bought in by a chance divinity—a summer lady of kindly and unorganized impulses, who had left the village after one season, without evicting him, without collecting rent, without even a personal interview with her puzzled beneficiary. Jonathan had stayed on in his old home because he had been given to understand that his benefactress (of whom he knew nothing except that, by a pretty accident, she bore the name of Mersey) expected him to do so “for the present.” This phrase, which

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flagellates the anxious temperament even in a tolerable situation, tormented Jonathan at first. But now he had ceased to forecast, as he had ceased to fear. For the past two years he had existed like a shell-fish, under the old roof to which his organism had conformed. He planted corn and vegetables behind his house, and picked apples in front of it. He had a few hens, and lived a good deal on eggs. The neighbors gave him milk. The overseers of the town poor, with a certain consideration for this faded gentility, such as occasionally illuminates the hard-headed public guardians in our kindly New England villages, had refrained from forcing the old man into the alms-house. He cut down an oak-tree now and then, or a pine—it took him a good while—and contrived to keep from freezing. The town saw to it that he did not starve. But Jonathan had ceased to be a wage-earner. It

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was a good while since he had handled money. People, according to their individual tastes, gave him almost anything else—a pig, or cold potatoes, a bantam chicken, cream-of-tartar biscuits, or grape jelly, darned flannels, or mince pie, cheap tea, or rubbers that leaked. One inspired lady presented him with a crêpe tissue-paper lamp-shade, and three had sent him Bibles.

Five years ago an imaginative woman who had eight children, four cats, and six dogs had contributed, as her share of the public responsibility in Jonathan's behalf, a puppy.

This donation had become in the life of the desolate old man an epoch beside which everything else that he often thought about retreated into an episode. His youth, his friendships, his marriage, and his release from it by the unexpected death of his wife in middle life; the summer when his daily

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paper had to stop; the year when he sold his little library; the winter when he had pneumonia; the year when his house was sold over his head—all retreated into mistiness before the date when David became his dog.

David had been a fall puppy, and that threw him for the first winter of his life closely into the society of his master, who cherished the kissing, clawing creature with the devotion of a solitary man.

Jonathan shared his fire, his food, his bed, his mind, his heart, his past, his future, with the puppy; guarded him anxiously from every snow-storm, covered the shivering little body with his own ragged comforter a dozen times a night, brooded over him like a mother through distemper and teething, and patiently educated the growing dog with the passion and the opportunity of love and leisure.

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"Why, you're nothing but a baby—you!" he used to say. Beyond the lot of most of his race, David had been distinguished by the friendship of man. For five years he had been the comrade of a lonely and intelligent master. He drew without check upon the resources of age, of desolation, and of sensitiveness.

Unlike most human spendthrifts of affection, David had respected his privilege. As an intellect he had developed vividly, but as a heart he was supreme. More cannot be said of his passionate fidelity than that it was the passion and the fidelity of his race presented in something like a typical form.

As Jonathan sat in the hot June afternoon with his face upon his shut hands, David came up the walk. He had been gone for some time—longer than usual. He had his own affairs (the most subject soul has) and occasionally attended to

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them; whether calls of a social or business nature, political duties, private detective work, or sheer mental recreation detained him, Jonathan often wondered, but never asked. He respected David's individuality. The dog had never voluntarily remained away from his master an hour in his life. To-day he had exceeded his precedent. Jonathan's face came up abruptly from his clasped fingers and regarded David over the porch rail.

"Why, David!" he said. "It's an hour and twenty minutes!"

David stood still and returned the look protestingly. He showed signs of agitation. He was panting heavily, and his tail deprecated his master with swiftly repeated strokes. These, as he started up the steps, thumped on the porch rail. David was a collie—a sable collie of fine proportions and with a kingly head. His

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ruff was white, and his paws. He had a white part in the middle of his forehead. His eyes were at once thoughtful and happy. His demeanor was dignified. The shape of his head was irreproachable, and all his points were excellent—he was clearly of good birth—but he had one defect. He was badly marked. A white spot over his left eye disfigured him for the taste of fanciers. It was a singular mark, like a small star. This fortunate disfigurement had preserved him for his humble and happy lot.

“You see, David,” Jonathan would explain, “she couldn’t sell you. If you’d been as handsome as the rest of your family you and I would never—”

But Jonathan finished the sentence with a big hug. It was impossible to imagine what life would have been if he and David had never met and loved.

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The star-marked collie sprang up the steps and rapturously embraced the old man. David's ardor did not offend: he kissed delicately—not all over, but only behind his master's ear. He had the air of trying to say something out of the common course. Jonathan listened attentively and with respect; but his face and that of the collie both showed that the man failed to catch the dog's meaning.

"David," said Jonathan, sadly, "I've been worrying about you. I suppose you know you're a tax-dodger?"

With an air of mortification the dog promptly hung his head before this accusation.

"It isn't your fault, David," proceeded Jonathan. "You're not to blame."

David's fine head came up from his ruff as quickly as it had fallen.

"It's my fault, David. I can't pay. I

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can't get together two dollars—not any way. I've only got seventy-six cents. Your taxes are most two months overdue. I've been so worried I can't sleep. I'd go around with a hat for you, David. I *would*, for you—but if I did . . . I don't know! I can't say. You have a pretty good appetite, you know, David. And if the Town should take it into its head . . . Why, David! What's this on your neck? Where have you been, sir? What's happened to you?"

The clouded face of the dog cleared swiftly as his master's long, thin hands strayed to the broken end of a rope which hung from David's collar. The collar was an old skate-strap, neatly marked in indelible ink with the name of Jonathan Perch. But the face of the master darkened as visibly as that of the collie had lightened.

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"You've been tied up and kept!" cried Jonathan, with agitation. The dog barked excitedly.

"Somebody kept you! You gnawed off and got away!"

David's fine head nodded like a man's.

"David! David!" cried Jonathan Perch. "Was it the Town did it?"

David whirled and barked shrilly.

"Yes or no?" demanded the old man. "Bark no—One! Bark Yes—Two! Yes or no, David? Answer, sir!"

And David barked twice.

"Oh," groaned Jonathan, "that's what my worrying meant! I always find there's reason for it when I *have* to worry. They'll take you, David—see if they don't! Your poor old master is too poor to help it. . . . I should think you'd be ashamed of him, David. Ain't you?"

By this time the dog was whimpering

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like a child. He stood up and put his fore paws about the old man's neck and began to kiss passionately.

"Yes or no?" quavered Jonathan. "Ashamed of me, David? Yes or no?"

Then David punctuated the air with staccato barks, single and sharp—No! No! No!

"If I were the Almighty," protested Jonathan Perch, "or if I were the Town, I wouldn't do such a thing, not if I died for it, David!"

He lifted his trembling hands from the dog's neck and put the tips of his fingers together (as one sees them in the great picture). Was he praying to God? or to the Town? In the mind of the old village pensioner the two may have been a little confused.

"Say your prayers, David," commanded Jonathan Perch. "Guess they're worth as much as most Christians'. Maybe He's

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the kind of a God who would hear a dog's prayer—no telling, David. If you don't want 'em to take you away from your master, say your prayers, sir!"

The dog dropped, put his fore paws upon his master's knee, and his chin upon them. The old man still sat with his trembling hands raised—the tips of the fingers put together. Tears were storming down his cheeks. He spoke in a low and solemn tone.

"Lord," said Jonathan Perch, "I haven't got anything but this dog. I'm convinced they're going to take him away from me. I can't bear it—I can't bear it anyway in the world. Lord, I'm a poor old fellow. Life has gone pretty hard. It's beaten me. I'm not enough of a man now to pay his taxes. I haven't got anybody else to talk to but this collie and You—that is, Thee. I'm rather a lonesome old man.

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I couldn't begin to tell You—I mean Thee—Lord, how I feel about my dog David. . . . I haven't been much of a praying man. I don't excuse myself. That's my fault, too. I don't know how to express myself . . . to a Person like You—Thee. But if there is any Thou, Lord God who made man-love and dog-love . . . it appears to me as if some attention would be paid to this matter—" Jonathan paused. "Amen," he said, abruptly.

At the sound of the word David sprang from his knees (as he had been taught), and looking now quite happy, stood to his hind feet once more and replaced his arms about his master's neck. As he did so he kissed the tears from the old man's wet cheek.

The two were in this position when a clattering team stopped in front of the house. Its driver, a man in a soiled seer-

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sucker coat, threw the reins over the dashboard of the wagon, and came up the walk toward the porch with an impatient step.

At the sound of the first advancing footfalls a portentous change took possession of the collie. His hair bristled; his ears shot backward; he planted himself before his master, fore paws firmly fixed, back arched, head lowered; in his eyes a slumbering rage, like that of a man with a cherished enmity, waked fiercely. He made no effort to approach the visitor, either in greeting or in hostility; the dog had the attitude of a garrison.

"Hello!" cried the man in the soiled coat. "I've come after your dog."

David's upper lip wrinkled wickedly; he made no other reply.

"The blamed critter got away from me," complained he of the seersucker. "He chewed his rope and put, lickity-

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split. The Town don't allow that sorter thing. When I get a critter into my Pound I expect him to stay there. Come here, you darned deserter, you! You won't get away *this* time, you bet!"

From some hitherto unexplored depth in David's throat issued a formidable sound—he was not a growling dog; neither he nor his master knew that he was capable of a roar like that.

"Better be a little careful," quavered Jonathan Perch. "I never knew him do anybody any harm—but he doesn't seem to like you exactly. I can't answer for the consequences if you got too near."

David echoed this feeble protest with another mighty roar; this one came from between his clinched teeth; he stood like a statue of a collie, rigid and menacing.

"Hand him over to me, then!" commanded the intruder.

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"Who are you, anyhow?" cried Jonathan Perch, getting to his feet. The old man trembled like one of his own poplar-trees which stood silver and quivering beside the front gate.

"Me? I'm the dog-catcher. That's what I am. Hand me over that there dog! You ain't paid his taxes. Hand him over!"

"I'll see you in hell first," replied Jonathan, steadily. David advanced a little and took up his position at the head of the porch steps. He retained the same attitude, and showed as yet no intention to spring; but beneath the collie's wrinkled upper lip the tooth which reminds us most of a wolf and least of a housemate in our dearest dog gleamed so that Jonathan slipped a finger through David's collar.

"I don't know's I blame ye," remarked the dog-catcher, unexpectedly; he retreated a step or two and stood uncertain. "Folks

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says you set a sight by the critter. Why don't you pay up, then?"

"I've got seventy-six cents toward it," pleaded the old man. His shaking hands went to his pocket.

"The Town don't receipt on account," said the dog-catcher, with an accent of marked disgust. "I'll call again," he added, looking David in the glaring eyes. "I—I won't take the critter to-day."

Then David laughed.

"You'd better pay up," advised the dog-catcher, not unkindly. "'R else you'd better let me have him and have it over. We kill 'em easy. We ain't Apaches—not if we be the Pound! I'll give ye till come a Chuseday—that's three days—to think it over, Jonathan." The dog-catcher turned. "Besides," he continued, thoughtfully, "it mought be better for ye, come to long run o't. There *is* folks

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that says ye hadn't orter to be feedin' so big a critter, and you dependin' on the Town. See? If the Town should get to thinkin' that way—an' come to stoppin' yer aid—where'd you be, I'd like to know? Or the critter, either. See? He'd come up in our hands anyhow you fix it. See?"

"I see," replied Jonathan, in a very low voice. "Thank you. Good-morning. David! No, sir!—*David!* Let that man *alone*, sir!"

For David had reared and stood—roaring, and defying the feeble old finger which restrained him.

"He's no fool of a dog," admitted the dog-catcher with reluctant professional admiration. "Why don't ye sell him?"

The man in the seersucker climbed into his wagon without further remark, and drove noisily away. Once he looked back.

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David, straining on the skate-strap, was using mighty language. The June afternoon echoed with the dog's adjectives and substantives. The dog-catcher smiled with grim appreciation as he drove away.

But Jonathan did not smile. He shook from head to foot. He could with difficulty keep his fingers on David's collar. He felt himself suddenly very faint, and brokenly appealed to the dog:

"Don't, Davie—don't, dear! I can't hold you, David. You stay with master. Master feels sick, David—he—"

His head drooped and fell over upon the head of the collie, whose mood and manner changed immediately. He began to lap the old man's face, whining the while, but retaining such a position as to support the weight which had fallen against him until Jonathan somewhat recovered himself.

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"Thank you, David," he said, catching his breath, feebly. "You always were a good nurse. David! David! What *shall* we do?"

At this moment Jonathan perceived that wheels had stopped again in front of his house. They belonged to an empty victoria driven by a liveried coachman who was exercising a smart black pair.

"How much will you take for your dog?" demanded the coachman, without preliminaries.

"Who are you?" gasped Jonathan, "and what do you want of him?"

"These are Mrs. Mersey's horses," replied the coachman, haughtily. "I thought everybody knew *that*. She wants a dog—a good dog. I'm looking about for her."

"Oh, *she*?" quavered Jonathan. "I never met the lady, but I suppose—I've reason to think she must be a kind lady."

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Do you think she would treat him—David has never had anybody but me. He is a good deal spoiled. I— There isn't money enough in the State to buy my dog, sir."

"Then what do you waste my time foolin' for?" cried the coachman, crossly. He took up his whip and would have driven off. But Jonathan stayed him.

"I can't pay his taxes, sir," he said, deprecating the servant. "I'm too poor. The dog-catcher has given me till Tuesday. Then they will kill him. I have only seventy-six cents. Besides, he says the Town ain't likely to let me keep him very long, anyhow, he's so big. Would you—" Jonathan summoned his sinking voice, and in a tone of anguish too fine for the ears that heard it, desperately faced his fate and David's. "Would you give as much as two dollars for him? I—I can't take money for David. I can't make money

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out of David. But—if his taxes were paid—if he weren't a pauper—like me—and had a kind home—perhaps I'd consider it. I don't see how I can let them kill *David*."

"I'll pay them taxes on the spot," answered the coachman, eagerly, "and bring you the receipt inside of twenty minutes."

Snapping the long whip about the ears of the pair, the fellow whirled away. In half an hour he returned with the tax receipt.

The old man and the dog were precisely as he had left them, sitting silently. David's head was upon his master's knee. Jonathan's face had fallen over upon David's head. Neither stirred as the coachman, who had brought a footman back with him, gave the reins to the boy and sprang down from the box.

"Here it is," he said, hurriedly, holding out the receipt. Jonathan did not reply.

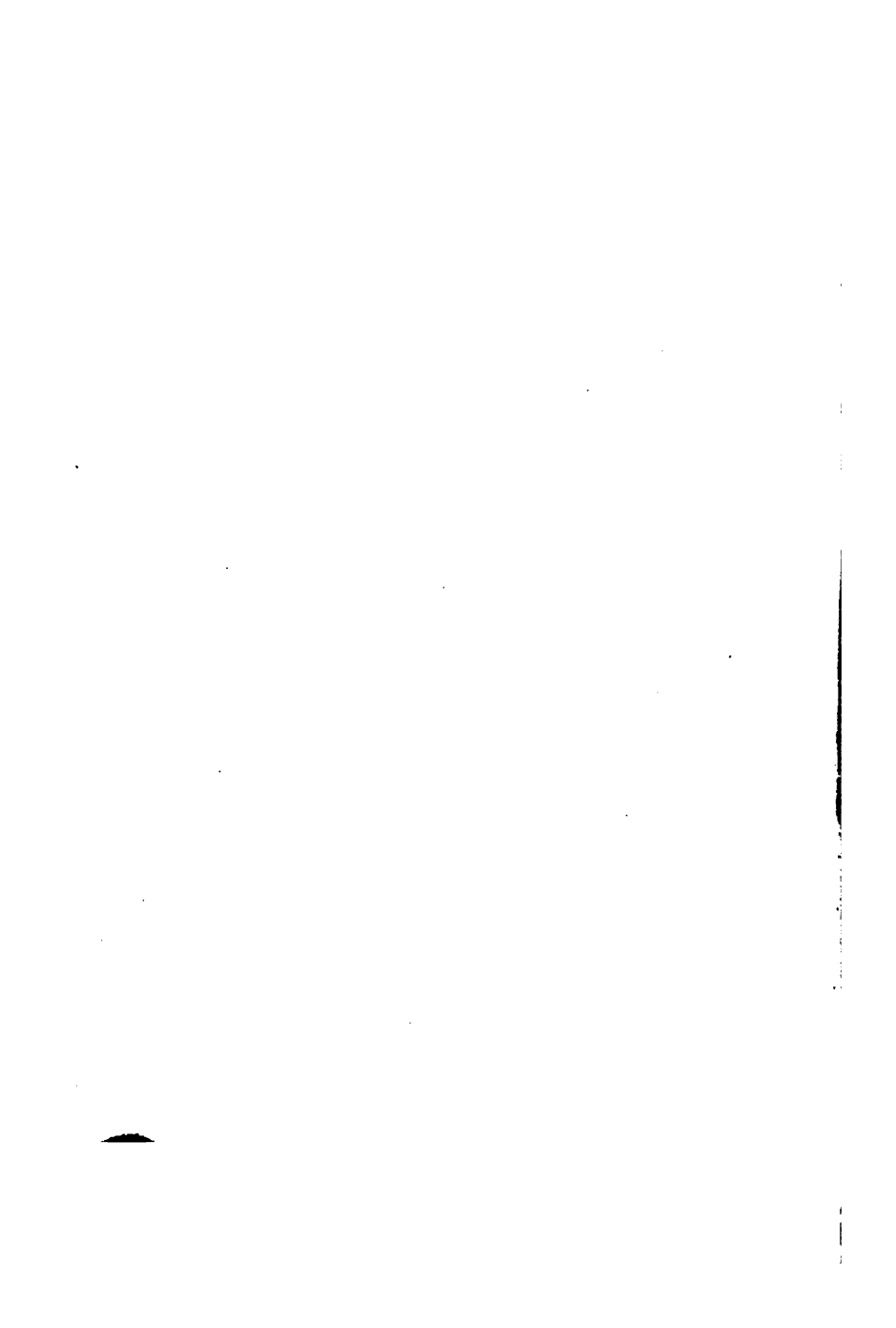
JONATHAN AND DAVID

"What's the matter with you, old fellow, anyhow?" demanded the coachman. "Why don't you wake up? It's a fair bargain. The dog's mine now. Here!"

Disregarding the protests of David, who was now alive to the emergency, the fellow tucked the tax receipt into the old man's cold hands, dexterously leashed and muzzled the dog, and pulled him away. Jonathan sat where and as he was. When the dog was taken from him, his gray head had fallen—or perhaps the purchaser of David had laid it over—upon the piazza rail. The old man did not stir. He was spared the separation. The coachman stopped at the nearest neighbor's and left word that old Jonathan was in a kind of a fit or a faint, and some woman better go see to him. Then he carried David home to his employer, to whom he sold the collie for twenty-five dollars.



JONATHAN'S FACE HAD FALLEN OVER UPON DAVID'S
HEAD



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The nearest neighbor came over. She was a young wife with a baby in her arms, and, thus encumbered, she did all she could for the old man. She made him some tea and got him to his room. In the morning she came in again, but he told her that he was perfectly well and needed nothing and wanted nobody; so she put bread and milk and water within his reach, asked him if he didn't want to kiss the baby, and went away. Jonathan lay as she had left him in the evening, and as she had found him in the morning, fallen upon the outside of his bed, silent and still.

She had tried to throw something over him, but when he found what it was, the old man flung it away—then fell to weeping, and drew it back—then pushed it from him, with a groan. It was the ragged coverlet under which or on which, according to the season, David had slept since he

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was a fall puppy and shivered the first winter through, a clawing, wobbling dependent on his master's tireless care and tenderness.

That first night Jonathan did not sleep at all. Sometimes his mind strayed and his trembling hand went down to pat the dog; the emptiness at the foot of the bed smote him cold and weak; his pulse fell and his breath shortened. When day came he must have got some broken sleep, perhaps not knowing it, for his dreaming and his waking ran together like the tints in a prism, so that it was difficult to say where one ended and another began. He tried to eat, but could not; he drank the water, and some of the milk, and turned his face to the wall. The dreadful hollowness of the room, the aching silence in the house, seemed to the lonely old man like a destiny which he had been denied the strength to face—the last

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buffet of a life which had worsted him everywhere. He retained a subconsciousness that his suffering would not be generally understood by other men.

"He was all I had," he muttered, apologetically. "I'm rather a lonely old man. I hadn't anybody else."

Then again:

"I might stand it better if it weren't for what David is undergoing. David won't understand it. He'll think I sold him. Oh me! Oh me! He'll think I *wanted* him to go."

On the second day he crawled up and moved about a little, but he was so weak that he went back to bed, and there he remained, half adoze and half awake, and did not try to get up again. No one came to inquire for him; his door remained unlocked, and his window, with the rude mosquito-bar that he had made for it, was open.

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The soft June nights looked in gently, and the gleaming June days flashed brilliantly by the solitary man; he regarded both indifferently, for he was not any longer strong enough to care what happened; and so it came to be the fifth night since David and he were parted.

On this night, at a little past midnight, Jonathan started from a happy dream. He thought that he and David were together in a large house, among many people, and that David was showing off some of his pretty tricks, and that when he said: "Are you your master's dog, David? Bark once—No! Bark twice—Yes!" David, mad for joy, barked twice, and twice, and twice again, and clung to him and kissed him rapturously, and was never to be taken from him again till death, that separates the man and the wife, the child and the mother, the lover and the beloved, that spares no life and

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has mercy upon no love, should part the master and the dog; but nothing less—no, nothing else should come between them.

He woke to a tremendous fact. It was the voice of David barking at the door.

“Oh, my God!” cried Jonathan. “*David!* And I haven’t got the strength to get there. *David!* Wait a minute till I try to get to you.”

But David did not, could not, would not wait. While the old man, panting and shaking, was trying to get to his feet and stand on them, the collie came crashing through the window—glass and screen and all splintered around him—and with a mighty cry the two were in each other’s arms.

It was not until noon of the next day that the lawful owner of David interrupted the rapturous reunion of the man and the dog. Jonathan, who had dreaded the reappear-

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ance of the coachman, received Mrs. Mersey with a forced composure which touched her instantly. Mrs. Mersey was a round, middle-aged, mother-hearted woman—not in the least the ideal Lady Bountiful that her old pensioner had pictured her; he had thought her to be some fashionable young lady, slender and remote. When Jonathan looked into her warm brown eyes, he thought, “Why, she’s just a woman!”

“Madam,” he began, tremulously, “I know the dog is yours. I—have had him a good while, that’s all. And we love each other, madam. David couldn’t— He *had* to run away, you see. . . . Look at the window where he broke in to get to me last night.”

Jonathan’s unsteady finger pointed proudly to the broken glass.

“He was in such a hurry,” he said. “Madam, I would have returned him to

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you this morning. I know David is your property now. There, David! there, sir! Don't touch the lady. She's a kind lady, David. She'll do—the right thing." With both arms around the dog's neck the old man repeated the phrase confusedly:

"She will do—the right—thing. . . . You see, madam, I wasn't able to walk over to your house—with David. I haven't been very well since I lost David!"

His head fell back upon the pillow, and David's went beside it.

"When did you eat last?" cried Mrs. Mersey. The tears were driving down her cheeks. She did not offer to touch the dog, but moved about quickly in her rich, embroidered, thin dress, dexterously making a fire, tea, and toast, and cooking eggs, as if she had been some plain, experienced housewife. When she brought Jonathan the food he tried to swallow it, but put it down.

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"Could I keep him—about a half an hour longer, madam?" he asked, humbly.

"You shall keep him forever!" blazed Mrs. Mersey. "You don't suppose—you couldn't suppose— Why, what do you think I am made of? Nobody can take the dog from you—*nobody*, if I say so."

"Not even the Town?" gasped Jonathan. "You hadn't thought, had you, about the Town? They say he eats so much."

"Not even the Town!" cried the lady, hotly. "Let him eat. I'll see to that. Let him eat all he can—and you, too. The dog is yours. Don't you understand?"

"Oh, madam!" gasped Jonathan. "Oh, madam!"

He turned his face upon the collie's neck and cried like a child. And David lifted up his voice and cried too. And the summer lady did as much. For she was a woman of quite unorganized, kindly im-

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pulses, as we have said. She did not care whether she made people happy in the usual way or not. She only cared to make them happy.

The chance divinity—as is the way of such divinities—took Jonathan's case warmly to heart. Within an hour beef tea, cold fowl, strawberries, sugar, fresh milk, and coffee tempted the starving old man to the first sufficient meal that he had eaten for six days. When Jonathan found in the hamper a package of dog-biscuit and a portly mutton bone, he brought the tips of his fingers together in the touching Albert Durer way, as if he were asking grace over David's supper.

"I said she was just a woman, David!" he muttered, with wet and happy eyes.

She was woman enough to follow her pretty benefaction in person the next day. It was rather early in the morn-

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ing, but she found the old man up and dressed, and tottering about the house in his clean, worn, black coat—two buttons sewed on with blue thread and one with white. David hung on Jonathan's every motion, head on master's knee, paws around his neck, kisses on his cheek. The dog's fine eyes had a frightened look. He regarded Mrs. Mersey with suspicion, but in silence. David's faith in humanity had received a terrific shock. The only fact in life of which the collie felt any assurance was that his master was not to be blamed for the existence of dog-catchers and coachmen.

"Madam," began old Jonathan, flushing with pleasure, "you do me an honor. I was about to try to call upon you to say—if you will permit me, madam—that I should take it as a favor if you will allow me to pay back David's price, on the in-

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stalment plan. I have seventy-six cents toward it—" His hand went to his pocket. "That leaves him in your debt one dollar and twenty-four cents. I think David would feel happier if he were *really* my dog again. I hope I have not offended you, madam?" he broke off, anxiously, when he saw the expression of doubt or displeasure which brushed the face of his benefactress.

"But Peter said— How much did you sell the dog to Peter for, Jonathan?"

"Two dollars," said Jonathan, promptly, "the amount of his tax bill."

The lady challenged the old man's candid eyes for an instant only. This was but the second time that she had seen Jonathan Perch; but she knew Peter Sweeney.

"Very well," she said, quietly, "I will take that money—if you wish me to."

Shining with joy, Jonathan placed seventy-six cents in the lady's white-gloved hand.

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She had rather a small hand for a large lady.

"David!" cried Jonathan, ecstatically, "are you your master's dog? Bark once—No! Bark twice—Yes!"

Then David pierced the June morning with double barks, doubly repeated, and reiterated still again.

"That's no ordinary dog," observed Mrs. Mersey. "Can he do anything else as clever as that?"

"Why, that's *nothing*, madam!" boasted Jonathan. "David has a vocabulary of two hundred English words that he understands, and twelve French ones. But my French is pretty rusty now, so his polite education has been neglected. He can spell several sentences. And he can count—let me see—he can count up to twenty."

"I should like to see some of these miracles, if you please," suggested the lady.

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She sat back on Jonathan's crumbling old lounge, and David sat before her and studied her critically. David had not yet satisfied himself whether the lady were an accessory after the fact to Peter Sweeney.

The front door was open into the sitting-room, and the silver poplar showed, tall and slim, beyond the shining space. The tree did not tremble more than Jonathan's happy hands when he brought them together in his favorite, unconscious gesture.

"Ah," said Mrs. Mersey, smiling, "the Albert Dürer!"

"Madam?" asked the old man, with quickly troubled perplexity.

"Sometime I will show you. Are you fond of pictures, Jonathan? Did you ever care for them?"

"My training was in mathematics, madam. My education in art was deficient."

"Ah! Do you mind telling me what you

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were, Mr. Perch, in your younger life? What was your business—or—profession?" Jonathan's gray head lifted a little. He could not remember when any one had called him Mr. Perch.

"I was a teacher of algebra and geometry at the Normal School," he answered, gently.

"Let me see what the dog can do," replied the lady, brusquely. But her white glove stole to her wet lashes. So Jonathan showed the summer divinity what David could do.

The sable collie, as his master had averred, was not a common dog. When Jonathan said, "Bring your blocks, David," David found his blocks and spread them out upon the bare floor.

"Give us the alphabet, David." And David arranged the alphabet.

"Spell dog, David." And David spelled dog.

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"Master, David." And David spelled master.

The lady, absorbed, sat leaning forward, silently. The old man's face had grown serious and studious. He stood opposite the collie and regarded him fixedly. The dog's face indicated a close intellectual strain, not unmixed with anxiety.

"Spell lady, David," commanded Jonathan, slowly. "L-a-d-y. L-a-d-y."

David lifted his head, hesitated, shoved his blocks about uncertainly. He had for a moment an expression of distress. Evidently this was a lesson never learned before. The star on his forehead showed more than usual, and the dog seemed to be at a disadvantage, and to be aware of it.

Jonathan, fixing his eyes upon the dog, repeated, firmly:

"L-a-d-y, David."

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The dog pushed the blocks impatiently.
L—A— He stopped and whined.

“D,” repeated his master.

David uttered a sound between a bark and a gasp, but slowly finished spelling lady.

“Rest a minute,” said his master, patting him with a proud and loving hand, “and then we’ll count a little, David.”

When the collie had rested, he began to count; this he did with ease and pleasure, for it was plainly an accustomed task. He counted to five. He counted to ten. He counted to twenty.

“He can add and subtract!” cried the old man, proudly.

“I’ll believe it when I see it!” protested the lady. She was as much excited now as the man and the dog.

“Two and two are how many, David?” demanded Jonathan, in a loud, firm voice.

David barked four times.

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"Six from nine leaves how many, David?"

And David did bark thrice.

"It is astounding! Incredible! How do you do it? How do you do it?" exclaimed Mrs. Mersey. She drew her breath hard.

"That is my secret," replied the old mathematician, with dignity. "You have a right to it, madam, if you insist," he added, quickly and contritely.

"I insist on nothing, Mr. Perch," said the lady, impetuously—"except that you shall become a self-supporting, self-respecting citizen. And—give me three days to think it over—I think—I am not sure—that I see a way."

She vanished from his cottage as wonderfully as she had entered it; and for three days Jonathan saw her no more.

On the fourth morning her victoria and black pair appeared at the old man's gate. Peter had a repressed and melancholy ex-

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pression, and the footman, with considerable manner, brought Jonathan the following note:

Dear Mr. Perch,—A few friends of mine have expressed a wish to see your extraordinary dog. Will you kindly bring him to my house on receipt of this? It might be well to brush that handsome silky coat of his a little. Peter will drive you over.

Very truly yours,

MARY B. MERSEY.

To Jonathan Perch, Esq.

But when Jonathan, perplexed but obedient, prepared to get into the victoria, David utterly and magnificently refused. For gods nor men nor master would David ride with Peter Sweeney. The nearest neighbor, who stood on her porch with her baby in her arms, was disappointed to see that Jonathan and David had to walk.

It was not a long walk, however, perhaps half a mile, and the two arrived at Mrs.



"YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO IT, MADAME, IF YOU INSIST"

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Mersey's summer home in good spirits, and not more dusty than was to be expected. The lady herself came out on the piazza to meet them. She was dressed in something black, and thin, and elegant, which gave her a slender look, and which to Jonathan's refined taste seemed to qualify her perfectly.

He heard the hum of voices in the drawing-room. "My dream!" thought Jonathan. "My dream!"

He stood before his hostess patiently in his old, clean, black clothes, one button sewed on with white thread and two with blue; his cuffless wrists extended from his too short sleeves. David, watchful and anxious, sat stolidly at his master's feet. David felt that the drama of life had gone beyond his comprehension. He sat with one ear up, the other down, as a collie will when he is perplexed.

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"Mr. Perch," said the lady, in a voice so low that no one could overhear it, "my man will show you to one of the guest-rooms, where you will find something which you may like to put on before you meet my friends. No. This is no charity, sir. You will have earned them; they will be your own—like David. Oh yes, David may go too. And here—tickets for seeing David have been sold for a dollar apiece. An audience of sixty people is waiting—if you will be so good—to see some of David's remarkable mathematical feats.

"Allowing something for the new suit," proceeded Mrs. Mersey, with the tone of a philanthropist who, however unorganized her impulses, sometimes had views about pauperizing people, "that will leave you—" She held out to the trembling old village pensioner fifty fresh one-dollar bills.

"And I have arranged," continued the

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divinity, quickly, for her own lips quivered and her brown eyes suddenly blurred, "if you will be so good, Mr. Perch, for you and David to give three or four more entertainments at the homes of the neighbors before the season is over. And next winter—I am quite sure that next winter we can find plenty of people in town who will be delighted to see you and David—if—that is, if you think well of my plan? And David? Do you think David will like it?"

"Oh, madam!" said Jonathan, as he had said before—"oh, madam!"

But David stole up with slowly swishing tail and for the first time kissed Mrs. Mersey's hand. David was now quite ready to spell l-a-d-y.

The large rooms were both full when Jonathan came down in his ready-made black suit. He held himself tall and

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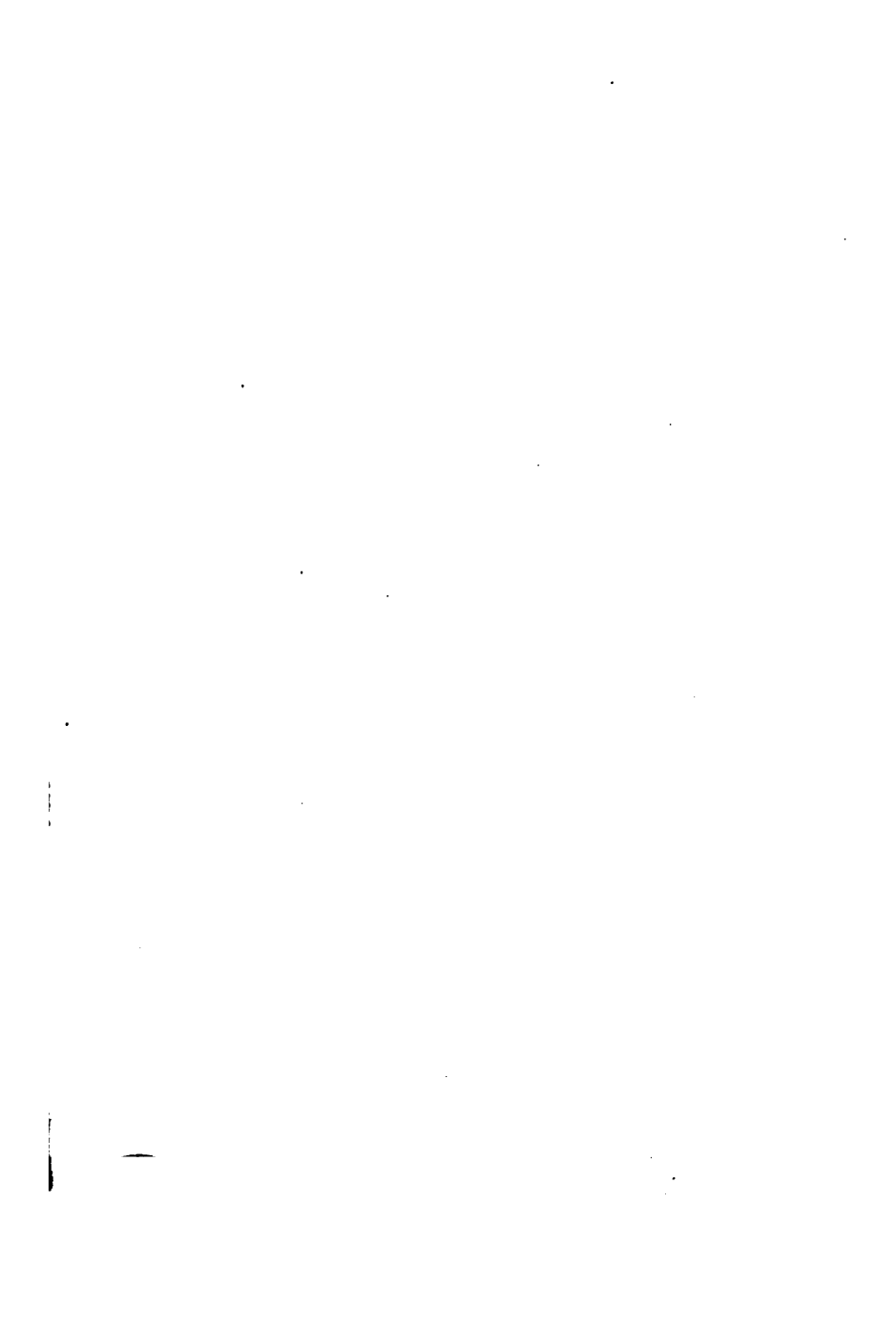
straight. His sunken eyes were brilliant, and his fingers did not tremble.

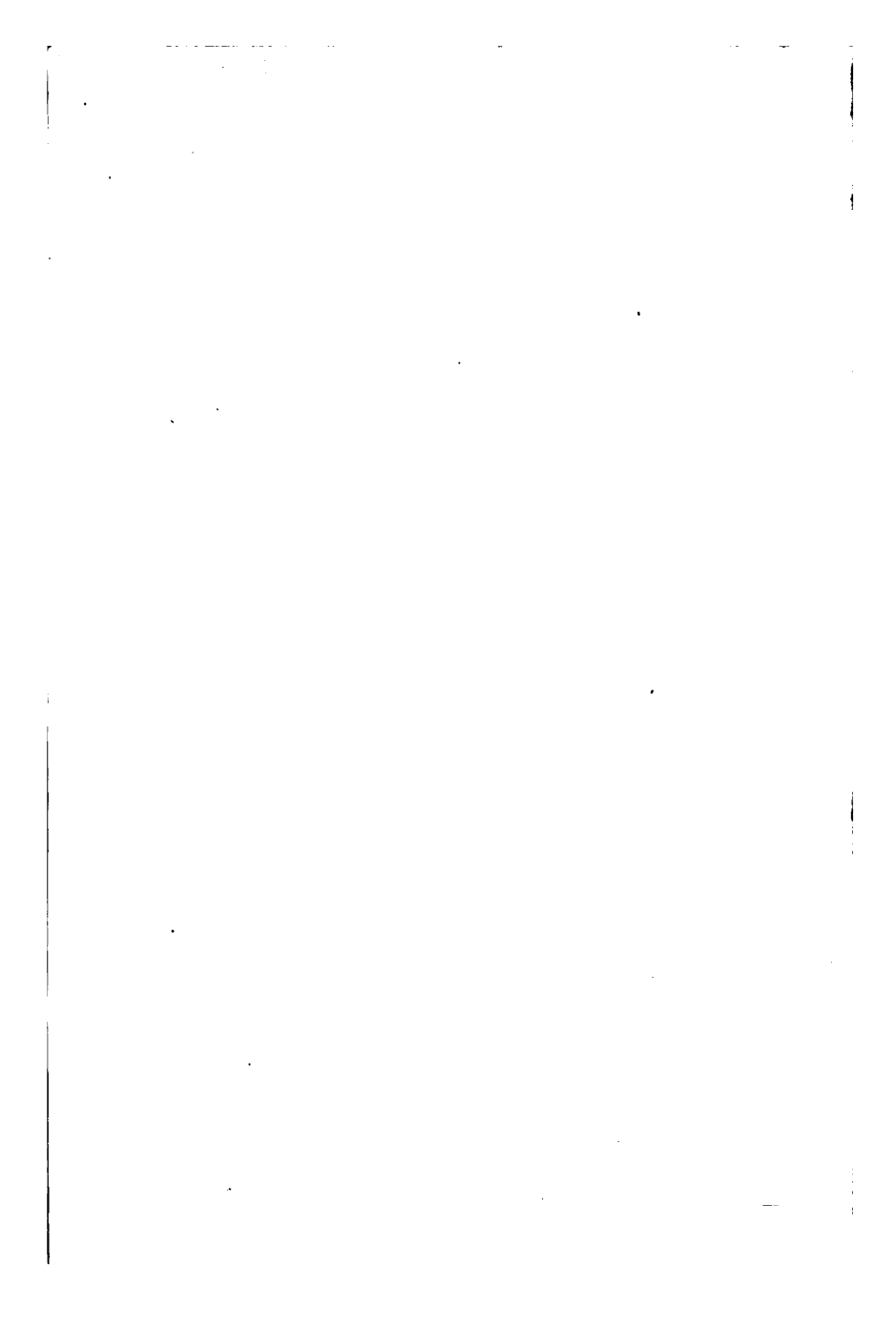
David walked beside him with dignity and quite composedly, and the two friends—the dog who had gained so much of the human, and the lonely man who had acquired something of the beautiful canine—came out together upon the little stage.

Above it, half hidden with drapery and silver-poplar boughs, there had been hung a copy of the "Praying Hands." But Jonathan did not see this; and the summer people, such as noticed it, wondered why it was there.

THE END







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